The Medical-Legal Partnership of Oregon: Impacting Health through Legal Services

Health Share of Oregon
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Background
Social determinants of health have a significant impact on the health of individuals and communities. Many of those social conditions can be traced to laws that are unfairly applied or under-enforced, often leading to health-harming legal needs that cannot be treated effectively without legal care. In partnership with Health Share of Oregon, The Medical-Legal Partnership of Oregon is working to integrate legal professionals within health care teams to improve the health of low income Oregonians.

Connection between Legal Issues and Health

Income
- Benefit Unit: Appeal denial of food stamps, health insurance, cash benefits, and disability benefits

Housing & Utilities
- Housing Unit: Secure housing subsidies, improve substandard conditions, prevent eviction, protect against utility shutoff

Education & Employment
- Education and Employment Unit: Secure specialized education services, prevent and remedy employment discrimination and enforce workplace rights

Legal Status
- Veterans & Immigration Unit: Resolve veteran discharge status, clear criminal / credit histories, assist with asylum applications

Personal Stability
- Family Law Unit: Secure restraining orders, fore family violence, secure adoption custody and guardianship for children

What is a Medical-Legal Partnership?
- A patient care model that aims to improve the health and well-being of vulnerable patients and populations by integrating legal professionals into the health care setting
- Based on the premise that legal problems are health problems
- Involves individual patient legal interventions as well as policy interventions aimed at improving population health

Breaking Down Silos: Integrating Care

Table:

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<th>Legal Assistance</th>
<th>Prevailing Model</th>
<th>MLP Model</th>
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<td>Service is client-driven</td>
<td>Service is preventive, focuses on early identification of needs and response to legal needs</td>
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<td>Individuals are responsible for seeking legal assistance</td>
<td>Health care team works with patients to identify legal needs and makes referrals for assistance</td>
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<td>Primary pursuit is justice</td>
<td>Aims include improved health and well-being</td>
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| Healthcare | Adverse social conditions affect patient health but are difficult to address | Adverse social conditions with legal remedies are identified and addressed as part of the standard care |
|           | Healthcare team refers patients to social worker/case manager for limited assistance | Healthcare team works with legal team to address legal needs, improve health and social systems |
|           | Advocacy skills are valued, taught, and deployed inconsistently | Advocacy skills are prioritized as part of the standard care |

The Need for Medical-Legal Partnership
- Research shows that 1 in 6 people need legal care to be healthy
  - Translates to nearly 50 million Americans who need some sort of legal care to be healthy!
- Study of pediatric patient needs found:
  - 94% of patients had one or more legal problem
  - 70% did not identify that their issues were legal issues
- Superutilizers of health care services have great needs for housing, coordinated care and public benefits to ensure stability and improve primary care utilization.
  - 5% of the population that accounts for 50% of health care costs

Medical-Legal Partnerships in Oregon
- No medical-legal partnerships currently operate in Oregon
- Planning for the first medical-legal partnership in Oregon began in 2014
  - Established advisory board comprised of 17 members including attorneys, health plans, clinics, hospitals, community service organizations, state agency
- Activities of the advisory board include:
  - Pilot project with OHSU Richmond Clinic
  - Strategic planning--the future of medical-legal partnerships in Oregon

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